

NSC BRIEFING

14 June 1955

**BACKGROUND--SINGAPORE LABOR STRIFE**

- I. "Sympathy" strikes in Singapore, accompanied by some violence, got underway 13 June (exactly one month after serious Communist-directed riots in May).
  - A. Strikes thus far involve 15-30,000 manual and transportation workers, although strike leaders had hopes for (and continue to claim) a general work-stoppage.
  - B. Immediate trigger was arrest (12 June) of six suspected Communists, five of whom were union leaders.
  - C. Actually, strike had been in making for some time, as one-day demonstration supporting wage negotiations in progress between 1,300 civil service clerks employed in harbor administration and Singapore government.
    1. Harbor clerks have been out for 7 weeks, and negotiations are now deadlocked on question of back-dating agreed salary schedule.
    2. Harbor union involved is a moderate one, affiliated with moderate Singapore Trades Union Council (TUC).
  - D. Leaders of "sympathy" strike now say it will continue until release of six arrested.
    1. Communist-directed students, who were "activists" in May riots, quiet to date.

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**II. "Sympathy" strikes engineered by far-left People's Action Party (PAP), which active in labor field.**

**A. Although PAP disavows Communism, it has associated itself with Communist Party in fight against colonialism, accepts support from strong Communist elements in Singapore Chinese student and labor groups.**

- 1. Communist Party, outlawed in 1948, appears to be successfully manipulating PAP.**

**III. Trade unionism accounts for only 76,000 of Singapore's estimated working force of 250,000 (80% Chinese).**

**A. Approximately half of 76,000 government-employed: 25,000 in moderate Singapore Trades Union Council, 7,000 in unions controlled by PAP, after this, field is open.**

**B. PAP has strategic position among public transport, education, and civil aviation workers.**

- 1. PAP may increase its influence among navy base and harbor employees as result "sympathy" strike.**

**V. Communist subversion and unrest in Singapore, principally affecting students and trade unionists, expected to increase.**

**A. Subversion receives chief emphasis in Malayan Communist directives.**

**B. Communists proved in May they can create trouble whenever they wish.**

**C. Morale of anti-Communists in Singapore has suffered severely during past month.**